

# A Couple After God's Own Heart

JIM & ELIZABETH  
GEORGE



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With thanksgiving to our Lord,  
Jim and Elizabeth George

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# Before You Begin



Asked to define the game of golf, one man said cynically, “Golf is a good walk spoiled.” Maybe the person who made this statement had just finished a bad round. Or maybe he hadn’t been trying very hard, or he didn’t feel golf was important enough to make it worthwhile to try to improve his game.

Whatever the case, this person’s statement is clearly a negative assessment of the sport. And unfortunately, there are a growing number of people today who spout this same kind of attitude toward marriage. What’s sad is that God intended that the joining together of a man and woman would bring the greatest human happiness known to mankind.

To any thinking person, it’s obvious that it is the bad golfer—not the game of golf itself—that is at fault. In the same way, it isn’t the divine institution of marriage that’s at fault, but the husband and wife who are the “bad golfers”—the bad partners—when it comes to their marital issues.

Now, getting back to our golfer—if he was wholly committed to the game, he would gladly make every effort to become the best golfer he could be. Then he would enjoy the game a lot more. In the same way, if a husband and wife are both wholeheartedly committed to their marriage, they will make every sacrifice and do whatever is necessary to keep their relationship healthy, growing, and fulfilling.

Many people want a good marriage, but oftentimes they don’t want to do what it takes to become the best spouse possible and

work through life issues as they pop up along the way. It's easier (or so they think) to get a new partner! Or to simply go through the motions, doing only the absolute minimum that might be expected in maintaining a marriage relationship.

This book is written to and for couples who want to work at improving their marriages—couples who desire to follow God (together!) and reap the lifetime of blessings that are sure to be theirs. We—Jim and Elizabeth—as a couple are hoping and praying that, as you begin to make your way through the pages of this book (and hopefully also the *Couple After God's Own Heart Interactive Workbook*) you will commit to building a marriage that lasts. We don't have to tell you that no marriage is perfect, but we pray that you, along with us, are progressing toward being a couple after God's own heart.

Oh, and one final note: This book has been a challenge to write—a refreshing challenge! It's true that we have a lot we can share with you to help your marriage mend, grow, and improve—whichever is needed. But we too are still on the marriage journey ourselves. We still have to apologize and say, "I'm sorry, babe." We can still get upset with each other. And, believe us, we still have times when complete stupidity marks our actions toward each other.

And here's a challenge for you: As you read along, whose voice will you hear throughout this book? Will it be Jim's voice or Elizabeth's? Will we qualify our words by prompting, "Jim speaking," or "Hi, it's me, Elizabeth, who's now writing"? We decided (an example of teamwork!) to write as one voice because we want you, as husband and wife, to read this book together—as a couple.

As you make your way through this book, you may not even notice when one of us leaves off and the other begins. (And isn't that the way it should be in a good marriage?) Oh, there'll be some places where it's obvious Jim is talking to husbands and Elizabeth chimes in for wives, and vice versa. But on the whole, our desire

is for this to serve as a seamless treatment of that wonderful—and demanding—institution called marriage. The two of you will enjoy journeying together through the lives of key couples in the Bible. You will also benefit from the lessons in God’s Word that can help you to grow toward a richer, more intimate love for one another. And blessing upon blessings, you will grow closer together as you share the devotional in the second half of this book, which was created just for you as a couple after God’s own heart.

Before you begin chapter 1, here are a couple of sobering thoughts for you to ponder:

—In 1788, Edward Gibbon, the English historian and author, finished the sixth and final volume of the now-classic *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. He offered several basic reasons for the collapse of the Roman Empire, and one of them was the decrease in the dignity and sanctity of home and marriage, which included the problem of a rapidly growing divorce rate. That reason is strikingly applicable to our society today.

—In AD 30, Jesus, the Son of God and God in human flesh, said, “[God] who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’... Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6).

Gibbons is right—for when marriages fall apart, it affects more than just the couple. It affects the immediate family and others beyond. The repercussions are felt in the church, the community, and even in society as a whole.

Which is why you as a husband and wife need to take Jesus’ mandate in Matthew 19:4-6 seriously. God’s design for marriage

has always been one man and one woman, together, for the rest of their lives. This is God's intent, for good reason: A strong and intimate marriage relationship is a perpetual fountain of joy and blessing to both the couple and everyone around them.

With that in mind, let's look to the life examples of key marriages in the Bible, and discover what it takes to be a couple after God's own heart!



## PART ONE



# Following God Together



# | Adam and Eve

## The Original Couple After God's Own Heart

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother  
and be joined to his wife,  
and they shall become one flesh.

GENESIS 2:24



It was another perfect day in paradise, and Adam was busy-ing himself at the far end of the garden. Today his to-do list called for naming the animals. “Let’s see now,” he said to himself as he stretched. “What should I call these two creatures? They look similar—except one has stripes and the other has spots.”

Adam knew he was talking out loud, but it obviously didn’t matter since no other person existed on the whole planet except Eve. *And, by the way*, he thought to himself, *I wonder where Eve is? She’s usually close by, but I don’t see her. Hmmm.*

Meanwhile, off in a brilliant field of multicolored flowers, Adam’s wife, the exquisite Eve, was leisurely making her way toward the center of the garden. As she strolled along, delighting in the beauty of the garden and the variety of its wildlife, she occasionally

became overwhelmed by the pleasure of her surroundings. She couldn't help stopping often to linger and stroke and inhale the different assortment of flowers, each with its own unique features and fragrance.

Knowing Adam was off naming the animals, Eve was quite startled by the pleasant voice of one of the creatures entwined around that one "special" tree in the garden. Propelled by curiosity, she walked slowly toward the voice, fascinated that this animal could speak. Mesmerized by the creature's voice, Eve couldn't help but listen.

The beautiful being casually said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

Eve responded to the creature, saying, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Then the creature questioned these restrictions and God's motives for the restraints: "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:1-5).

As Eve listened, suddenly God's limitations seemed a bit harsh and didn't make so much sense. And besides that, the fruit did look delicious. Maybe she had misunderstood the restrictions. And, since the creature had so confidently stated that only good could come from the fruit, Eve shrugged her shoulders and concluded, "Why not?" And she ate.

## What's Going On?

Do you ever try to imagine what life in the perfection of the Garden of Eden might have been like? We have, and our retelling of Adam and Eve's experiences in the garden may reflect a little of our imaginings. We do, however, know there's no way to describe perfection...but we can't help but try to picture it. But the subtlety

of the creature (referred to as “the serpent”) and the innocence of Eve could easily have happened in a similar manner.

The outcome of this drama and its disastrous results are firmly and forever detailed in the Bible and imprinted on our present-day lives and marriages. With the importance of this encounter that altered the history of mankind in mind, let’s take a closer look at some specifics from the Bible and see how all this unfolded for the world’s first couple.

### *The Command (Genesis 2:16-17)*

Before God created Eve, Adam was alone in the Garden of Eden. It was at this time that God gave Adam a specific, do-don’t command: “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die’” (Genesis 2:16-17).

Could it be any clearer? God very explicitly laid down the law for living in the garden. Do—eat anything you want and eat as much as you like. Don’t—eat from just this one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God even told Adam the consequence of disregarding His command—you will die.

Ever gracious and generous, God gave Adam unlimited freedom to eat from any and all trees—except one. Talk about a Texas all-you-can-eat feast! With all that was available, there shouldn’t have been any problems, right?

Wrong! Read on...

### *The Creation (Genesis 2:18-22)*

God knew of Adam’s loneliness, and He also knew the perfect solution:

It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him... But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man (Genesis 2:18-22).

Notice the time line. Adam received his instructions from God (make that he received his *command* from God) when he had no wife. Then, some time later, Eve was created. She was created from Adam's body—from one of his ribs. And she was brought forth for a purpose—to help Adam. She was to be his intimate companion, his friend, and his Number One helper and encourager (never mind there was no one else to help him!).

Nowhere in the Bible is there any indication that God repeated His instruction concerning the prohibition of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to Eve. Whatever she would know and needed to know, we must assume would have to come from her husband, Adam, for he was the keeper of this information.

### *The Creature (Genesis 3:1)*

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made” (Genesis 3:1).

Where did this come from? When God finished His creation of all things, He declared all His handiwork “good.” So what happened? The answer most scholars give is that we must assume that an evil force was speaking through this creature.

### *The Confrontation (Genesis 3:1)*

In the idyllic sin-free surroundings of the Garden of Eden, Eve had no experience with evil or cunning, with liars and deceivers. Yet she found herself face-to-face with a talking beast, the serpent, who said, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”

Temptation often comes in disguise, quite unexpectedly. Speaking through the serpent, Satan began his attack of sly, veiled slander and lies against God. Evidently Eve was not alarmed by the snake because she was apparently drawn in by a familiar presence. God had created life and order. But Satan now brought death and chaos.

### *The Conspiracy (Genesis 3:4-5)*

Throughout the Bible God's people are warned against false teachers and prophets. And here—in only the third chapter of the first book of the Bible!—we witness the first skewing and twisting and manipulation of God's Word: “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”

Satan's strategy was brilliant—and as deadly as an assault rifle. He cast doubt on God's Word (“Has God indeed said...?”), and on His goodness and motives (“God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God”). As a master orator, for his grand finale, Satan succinctly and blatantly contradicted God, who had warned of death as a consequence of eating the fruit. Satan cried out instead, “You will not surely die.”

### *The Confusion (Genesis 3:2-3)*

There is a now-classic book on marriage entitled *Communication: Key to Your Marriage*.<sup>1</sup> Yes, communication *is* key, and do we ever see this truth—and the results of a failure to communicate—in the confusion we now hear in Eve's words as she takes on the devil. We scream, “Don't do it!” and shake our heads as we hear Eve say to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

What?! Now where did that come from? Surely Adam and Eve had often—maybe even daily—passed by that “special” tree.

Surely they had multiple opportunities to talk about the tree and its significance, about what God had cautioned regarding its fruit. Surely they had discussed and recalled that God had given Adam (not Eve) the prohibition regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The instruction was a mere four words long—"You shall not eat." (Good grief, even a kid would get this!)

Either Adam did a poor job of communicating this unbelievably simple warning to Eve, or she chose to forget—or dismiss—parts of God's command. In fact, she created what she obviously thought was a new-and-improved version, adding, "...nor shall you touch it, lest you die." That was not in God's original command. Whatever happened, and whoever was at fault, Eve minimized their privilege to eat freely in the garden, added the prohibition about touching the fruit, and downgraded the penalty of God's original command from "You will die" to "You might die."

It's obvious that, when it came to resisting Satan, Eve was unequipped and unskilled at fending off his attacks.

### *The Consequences (Genesis 3:1-19)*

Eve was deceived by the snake and disobeyed God—she ate the forbidden fruit. That was Step 1 of her slide into sin...followed by Step 2: Eve offered the fruit to Adam, who ate with full knowledge that his action was wrong (1 Timothy 2:14).

We don't know if Eve knew she was wrong and presented the fruit to Adam because sinners love company. Or maybe because she didn't die right away when she ate and the fruit tasted so delectable she wanted to share it with her beloved husband. Whatever the reason, she gave it to her husband, and he ate. Did they experience instant gratification? No. Instead, they experienced instant awareness of sin as the eyes of both of them were opened (Genesis 3:6-7).

And their downward slide continued. Step 3: Adam and Eve tried to cover their sin and shame by making clothing and hiding themselves from God's presence (verses 7-8). Then in a face-to-face



question-and-answer session with God, they slipped easily to Step 4: Adam blamed Eve and God (“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree”) for his wrongs, while Eve blamed the creature (“The serpent deceived me”) (verses 12-13).

## **The Extent of Their Fall**

Check out the fallout from sin as we wrap up this tragic tale. Talk about a horror story—and it’s one that still affects all people—and couples—today!

- Shame as the two sinners realized their nakedness and sought to cover themselves by making clothes (verse 7).
- Separation from close fellowship with God (verse 8).
- Strife as each blamed someone else for what happened (verses 12-13).
- Sacrilege as Adam blamed God (verse 12).
- Sacrifice as God shed the blood of an innocent animal—the first blood spilled and the first animal to die in the perfect, sinless world He had created—to provide tunics of skin to clothe two sinners (verse 21).
- Suffering when they were banished from the garden into a now imperfect, sin-filled world, which included an ultimate physical death later in time (verses 16-19).

## **Putting It All Together**

There is so much in the lives and marriage of Adam and Eve that you and your spouse will never be able to relate to. No other couple was created by God out of dust and out of bone. And no other couple had the chance to live in a perfect world. And no other couple ever walked and talked with God—literally!

But all couples can certainly identify with Adam and Eve’s

failure—to one another and to God. We can recall bad choices we made that had lasting consequences on our marriage, our children, our finances, our health, and our job. We can point to something we did or didn't do that changed the course of our life forever.

Keep this perspective in mind as you check out some of the life lessons you can take away from “The Original Couple After God's Own Heart.”

• Lessons for Wives from Eve •

1. *Remember your purpose.* I know, I know—you've already got a long list of responsibilities and job assignments from God. But a key role is named by God in Genesis 2:18: “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Eve's first and Number One role—and the purpose for her creation—was to complement, complete, and fulfill Adam and to be a helper to him—to be, in a word, a “wife.” I especially love the translation that reads, “I will provide a partner for him” (NEB).

A year after I became a Christian I sat down and wrote out some goals for my life. I started out with pen in hand and wondered, *Well, who am I?* What had changed since I'd accepted Christ? The answer was both simple and profound, and it eventually became my life's mission statement: “I am a Christian woman, wife, and mom.”

With that statement I knew the aim of my life. As I approach each day, I don't have to wonder what my purpose is. It's to bring glory to God as a woman who knows Christ, to love my husband, and to love my children (Titus 2:4-5).

Your husband is Number One. He's the most important person in your life—right after God Himself! How about a Post-It note for your heart? “Today I am my husband's helper.” And it never hurts to put those Post-Its in a few other places...like in your Bible, on

the cover of your prayer journal, in the kitchen, and on your car's dashboard so you can be reminded of your purpose as you travel back home from work, school, church, or errands.

2. *Always ask.* You can certainly see from Eve's mother-of-all-blunders how quickly things can go downhill when we as wives fail to check in with our husbands. So, when in doubt, check it out. Even if there's no doubt, it's still a good thing to run your issues by your guy.

The Bible teaches that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man (1 Corinthians 11:3). A husband is responsible for his wife. So ask your husband when you are unsure. I can't count the number of times I've screamed at myself, "Elizabeth, don't be an Eve! Find out what Jim thinks." I've learned (like Eve did—the hard way) to ask first, act second. Of course, our goal as a couple is to have the same mind. And I admit, things go very well when I ask Jim, "Honey, what do you think I should do?" and he gives me an answer that I like. But I've also learned to listen to his answers and his reasons, and to respect his thinking even when I don't like or agree with his answers.

Whatever you're facing or wondering about—how to discipline the kids, whether or not to lay out a certain amount of money for some item, or if you should go back to school, get a job, join the choir at church—ask. Your aim is to be partners through life, and as partners, you want to move forward in step, as a unified force. As the proverb states, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

3. *Know your enemy—and how to fight back.* Temptation is a count-on-it-every-day occurrence. So prepare yourself for it. Don't get caught off guard. Gear up for the onslaught and the battle. How? Begin your day in God's Word. Let His truths ground you,

focus your thoughts, steady you, empower you, polish up your perspective, and help you get your head screwed on so you're thinking and responding according to God's Word. If Eve had God's command firmly—and accurately—fixed in her mind and heart, if she had memorized it and repeated it every day, imagine how differently the results from her encounter with the enemy might have turned out.

When you watch a tennis match, you'll notice the players are always on their toes, bouncing their weight from foot to foot, shifting their racket from side to side, hand to hand, ever moving and on guard, eyes riveted forward, just watching and waiting for the ball to blast toward them. Well, that's got to be you. Temptation will blast toward you today...and every day. It's as predictable as the sunrise. Carry that image with you as you enter each day with all its unknowns, its challenges, and its temptations.

And here's something else you can count on: "Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). And how exactly do you fight such a powerful enemy? "Be sober, be vigilant....resist him, steadfast in the faith" (verses 8-9).

Oh, and while you're at it, don't tempt your husband! Don't be an Eve. Two wrongs never make a right. Eve ate, and that was wrong. And asking Adam to eat was also wrong. I repeat, don't tempt your husband.

4. *Forgive your spouse.* There's no question that Adam and Eve had some serious forgiving to do. They had both failed—and failed each other. Worse than that, they had failed God. And they had even blamed each other—and God—for their failures. But thank God that in providing a covering for their sins and wrongs, He provided the example of forgiving others.

After your husband really fails, and after he really *really* fails, you are to forgive him. There can be no "going on" without pardoning

your partner. The New Testament tells us we are to forgive one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32). As a Christian, you have experienced God's forgiveness of your sin. Therefore you can—and are commanded to—extend forgiveness to others, beginning right in your own marriage.

You and your hubby can talk about your issues later, make plans for how to avoid or handle similar situations in the future, and take responsibility for his and her individual contributions that led to failure. But the first step to continuing on in your marriage is to forgive each other. And what if he doesn't or won't forgive you? Doesn't matter—God still expects you to forgive him.

So be quick to say, "I'm sorry" to your husband. Be determined not to blame your mate. Confess your part and your failure to God and ask His forgiveness. And be equally as quick to accept God's forgiveness and rise up and move forward.

5. *Go on.* As terrible and devastating as Adam and Eve's failure was—a 10 on the Richter scale—my favorite part is that they went on. In reality, there was no choice—they were ejected by God from their home in the Garden of Eden. But they still had each other. I like to picture this forlorn-but-forgiven couple acknowledging that the way back into the garden was truly shut forever, and then Adam reaching down and entwining Eve's hand with his as they looked into each other's eyes, then boldly facing forward and taking their first step into the unknown—together.

Both Jim and I grew up in Oklahoma. In Ponca City is the Pioneer Woman statue—a tribute to the women who gallantly packed up all their earthly possessions and, whether on horseback or in a wagon, left their homes and headed West alongside their men. Relentlessly they pushed westward, where they made new homes on the lands their husbands gained. This monument was created to honor the grit and spirit these frontier women possessed as they endured harsh conditions and forged a new life.

When I think of such conditions and the fortitude it took for the pioneers to leave the familiar and step into the unknown, I think of Adam and Eve. This brave twosome stepped out of a sinless, perfect paradise...into a world filled with hardship. God cursed the ground and told Adam, "In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life...In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground" (Genesis 3:17,19). And to Eve God said, "In pain you shall bring forth children" (verse 16). This couple suffered the consequences of their sin, but they went on. They moved ahead—together.

The same must be true of you and your husband. You're both going to fail God and you're going to fail each other—that's just a fact. But God has provided all that you need as a wife to go on to wherever God—and your husband—leads you. God extends His forgiveness. His grace is sufficient. His mercies are new every morning. And He is with you—always. This means you can go on.

• Lessons for Husbands from Adam •

1. *Remember your purpose.* (This is the same for you as it is for your wife!) God gave Adam dominion (Genesis 1:27-28). As the "firstborn" of God's human creations, Adam was responsible for everything. God entrusted not only the animals to Adam's care and oversight, but also his wife, Eve. Adam was assigned to be the leader. And, to add the full dimension to that role, you, like Adam, are also to be the spiritual leader in your marriage.

Spiritual leadership has been a husband's mandate from the time of creation itself. God gave Adam personal and specific instructions about God's dos and don'ts of the garden. Adam's job was to pass that information along to Eve and to make sure they as a couple followed God's directions to the letter. Somewhere along the line this information was either improperly communicated to Eve or somehow misunderstood by her. Whatever happened, ultimately

it was Adam's responsibility, as the spiritual head of the marriage, to make sure his wife got it right.

It's God's design for the husband to be the spiritual leader of the marriage and family. He is supposed to lead his wife and children in Bible reading and the study of God's Word. But somehow in our modern society, many husbands have abdicated this role and no longer lead their families spiritually. What's one easy way to turn things around? Take the initiative and make sure your family regularly attends a Bible-teaching church. You can also encourage your wife to take part in a Bible study. You don't need a theological degree to lead—all you need is to remember your purpose: Lead your family in the ways of the Lord! And if you are not that man right now, ask someone to mentor you and help you live up to your calling, to your purpose.

2. *Be available.* Adam was there...but he wasn't there. Sure, he had a job to do, but he either didn't see what was happening between Eve and the serpent, or he saw them talking and chose not to get involved. After all, he was doing what God had asked him to do! As men, we are generally by nature nomadic creatures. We love to hike, go on adventures, travel, and we have no problem moving from place to place. Women, by contrast, tend to prefer roots and routine. They like everything to be in its place, all neat and orderly with as few ripples as possible. Adam, as our prototype, was out naming the animals, while Eve was left alone to wander in the garden.

How can you be available to your wife if you or both of you are working at jobs and separated for part of the day—or longer periods of time? One vital thing you can do as a leader is develop some basic ground rules for being there for her. Maybe you call her a couple times a day to see how she's doing. That's one way Elizabeth and I keep in touch during our crazy days. On more than one occasion, that timely phone call helped us clear up a problem, answer

a concern, discuss how to proceed on a project or responsibility, or how to handle a “kid issue.” Or, best of all, it gave us another opportunity to say, “I love you.” It’s a little thing, but connecting really does make a difference. As one phone company says, “Reach out and touch someone”—and that someone would be your wife.

3. *Be protective.* We’re back again to what it means to be a leader. Sometimes as guys we use our role as leader par excellence to “delegate” things onto our wives.

Actually, *dumping* may be the more appropriate term. After all, in general, most wives are usually great at multitasking. Just look at the way they juggle the home, the kids, their jobs and responsibilities, their ministries at church, and both their parents and ours! So we conclude, Why not ask her to take the car into the repair shop? Or, hey, she’s pretty good at math. Why not let her take on responsibility for the family finances and make sure the bills are paid on time?

The list of tasks we husbands can delegate could go on and on, and unfortunately, sometimes it does! Our wives are so competent that we are more than happy to let them carry burdens we could shoulder ourselves. (Of course, if your wife is great at math and enjoys budgeting, you could let her do this while you take on something else around the house.) Face the facts: Your wife already has a lot on her plate, with her roles as a wife and mom and home manager and perhaps a worker as well. Your job is to protect her so she can continue to do her best in her primary roles. She’s not your assistant; she’s your wife.

4. *Be an encourager.* Sin brought a curse and judgment into the world and into the lives of Adam and Eve. Can you imagine how Eve must have felt after the bottom dropped out of her 100 percent perfect and beautiful life? She wasn’t malicious in her desires. She didn’t set out to willfully disobey God. No, she was deceived, and



her fall into temptation brought about terrible consequences—the worst! Her home was destroyed. Her relationship with God was altered, not to mention her relationship with her husband. She had to feel lower than that snake’s belly.

All of the above occurred, and in no way does that mean Adam was not also at fault. There’s an Italian proverb that says, “When a wife sins the husband is never innocent.” But still, that didn’t make things any easier for Eve. This is where Adam came to the rescue, and where you as a husband can help your wife.

After Adam got over blaming his wife, we read that he and Eve moved on. “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20). The name *Eve* means “life,” or “life producer.” What a positive statement, especially after having just received God’s death sentence—Eve, the mother of all life! The name Adam gave his wife wasn’t one that would brand her, or mar her, or serve as a forever reminder of failure. No, it was a statement that exalted her into a position of honor and respect. It gave her a future and a hope.

Many books report that a large number of women suffer from low self-esteem and a lack of confidence and self-worth. I often travel with Elizabeth to her women’s conferences, and she and I occasionally end up giving counsel to some of the attendees. I think because Elizabeth and I have learned to work together as a team, the women see this teamwork in us and yearn for it in their marriages. With tears in their eyes, they describe their husband’s attitude as exhibiting self-centeredness or a lack of tenderness. Through pain they will say something like, “I just wish my husband would whisper ‘I love you’ once in a while. He’s sure able to complain when things go wrong. Why can’t he show a little appreciation when things go well, which they do most of the time?”

Here’s a quick start for you. Right now, stop reading and tell you wife, “I love you.” If you’re not together at this moment, call, email, or text her. Then splurge when you see her and tell her you

appreciate her. You know you do. So let her know she's the greatest thing that's ever happened to you, because she is!

## *Building a Marriage that Lasts*



There are three basic elements needed to build a structure that lasts: a foundation, a blueprint, and tools.

In Adam and Eve we can't miss the foundation—love. Love for God and the love of God, along with love for each other, enabled this brave couple to face a dark and problem-filled future.

They also possessed the divine blueprint for marriage. God had laid out the specific roles for the husband and wife: Adam was to lead, and Eve was to be his helper, his complement, the one who completed him.

And, as the first couple ever left the safety and perfection of the Garden of Eden, they departed with the tools needed for building a marriage that lasts: forgiveness and hope. They carried in their hearts God's promise given in Genesis 3:15 that Eve's "seed"—Jesus Christ—would one day crush, destroy, and defeat Satan.

As you work on building your marriage—and as you as a couple face your trials—remember these words: "Each new day is another chapter in the unfolding promise of deliverance and life."<sup>2</sup>

## Where Are You on the Countdown to Communication?

5

*Level Five*—Talking trivia. This is safe, superficial, and little more than a warm-up for real conversation: “How’s the weather outside?” “How are you doing?” “Just fine, thanks. And you?” “Fine.” “Hey, can you hand me that newspaper?”

4

*Level Four*—Reporting facts about others. This level is somewhat more interesting, but still there is little risk of self-exposure. “I noticed that John and Mary bought a new car.” “How was work today?”

3

*Level Three*—Sharing ideas and impressions. Here is where real communication begins. You no longer play it safe, but are willing to take risks or reveal your thoughts and opinions, which can be accepted or criticized or rejected. “I think we ought to make that move. What do you think about this...?”

2

*Level Two*—Unveiling feelings and emotions. At this level you reveal not only your thoughts but your heart. At “gut level” you disclose what’s most important to you by communicating your heartfelt convictions and what moves you. “I love you.” Or “My faith is real to me because...”

1

*Level One*—Being completely honest, open, and vulnerable. This is the most mature level of sharing, where marriage partners become best friends as they share their deepest joys, fears, and struggles. “If I could do anything in world, I would like to...” “I have this sin in my life...” “My biggest struggle or fear is when...” “My greatest dream is...”<sup>3</sup>